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Sean 2003

SUGGESTED FOR
MATURE READERS

This is Lynch flying me to my drop-off in a black helicopter. Flying under radar, on an unregistered flight path.

Flying me away from one life and dropping me into another.



And this is his final pep-talk...

FORGET EVERYTHING YOU LEARNED. YOUR ONE GOAL NOW IS TO **BLEND IN**. THAT'S THE ONLY WAY YOU'LL **SURVIVE**.



AND I **NEED** YOU TO SURVIVE, AGENT... OR YOU MIGHT AS WELL HAVE DIED WITH YOUR MEN.



BUT WHEN YOU STEP OUT OF THIS CHOPPER, YOU STEP AWAY FROM **EVERYTHING** YOU'VE KNOWN, AND THERE'S **NO** TURNING BACK...

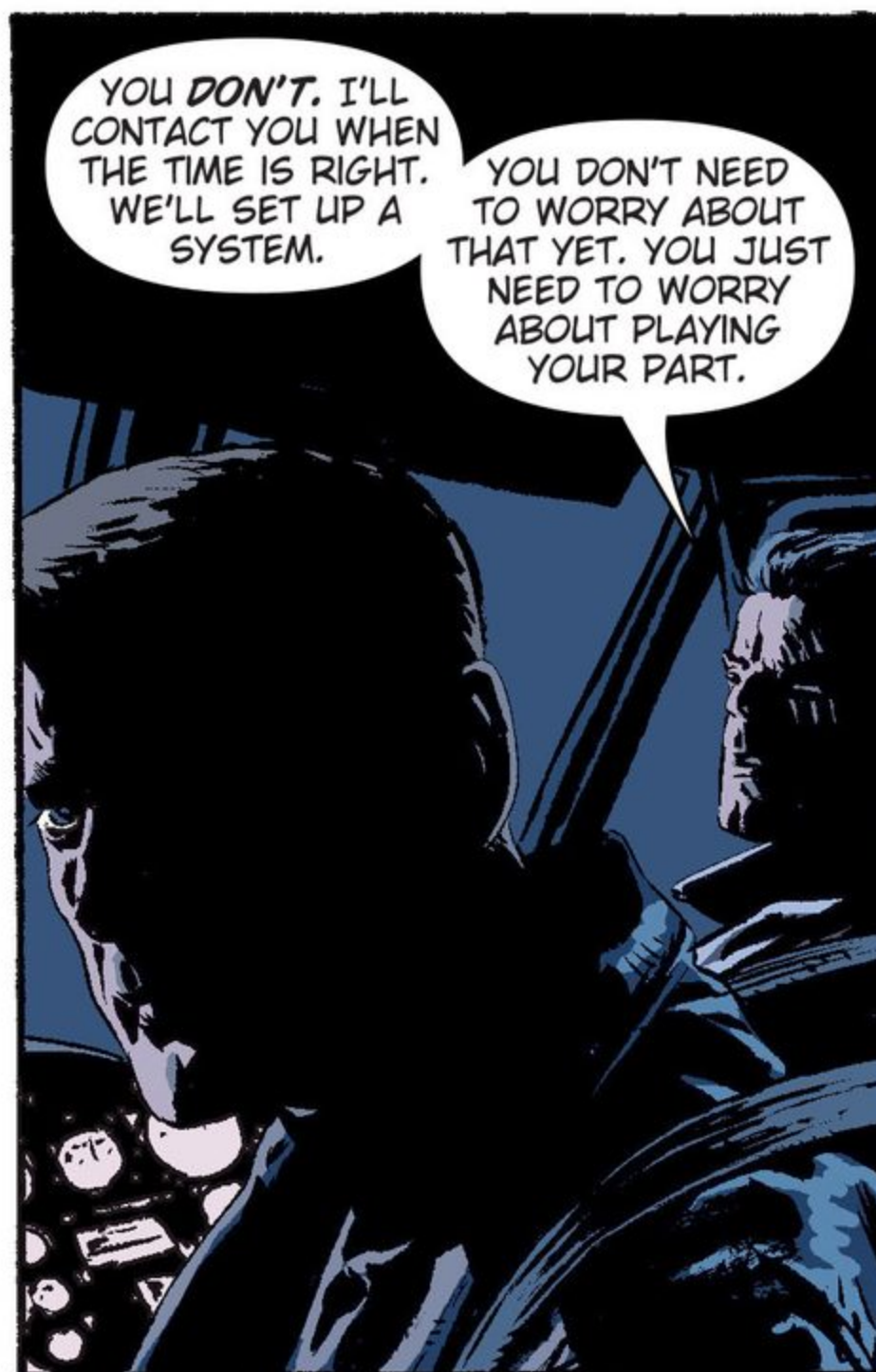
...NOT UNTIL YOUR MISSION IS COMPLETE.

HOW DO I CONTACT YOU?



YOU **DON'T**. I'LL CONTACT YOU WHEN THE TIME IS RIGHT. WE'LL SET UP A SYSTEM.

YOU **DON'T** NEED TO WORRY ABOUT THAT YET. YOU JUST NEED TO WORRY ABOUT PLAYING YOUR PART.





OKAY, HERE'S THE FORTY-THOUSAND-DOLLAR QUESTION...

...WHAT HAPPENS IF I GET **CAUGHT**?



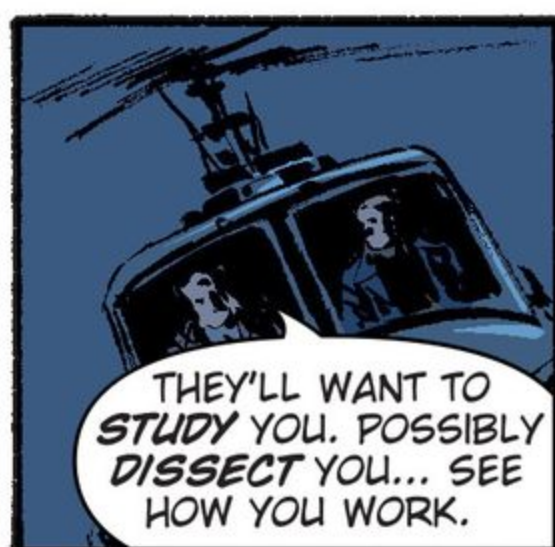
WELL, I **ASSUME** THEY'LL KILL YOU. IF THEY CAN FIGURE OUT HOW TO.

NO, I MEAN WHAT HAPPENS IF I GET CAUGHT BY ONE OF **US**?



OH. NOT **MUCH** BETTER, I'M AFRAID. THE EVIDENCE OF YOUR HIGH CRIMES IS **AIRTIGHT**, AGENT CARVER.

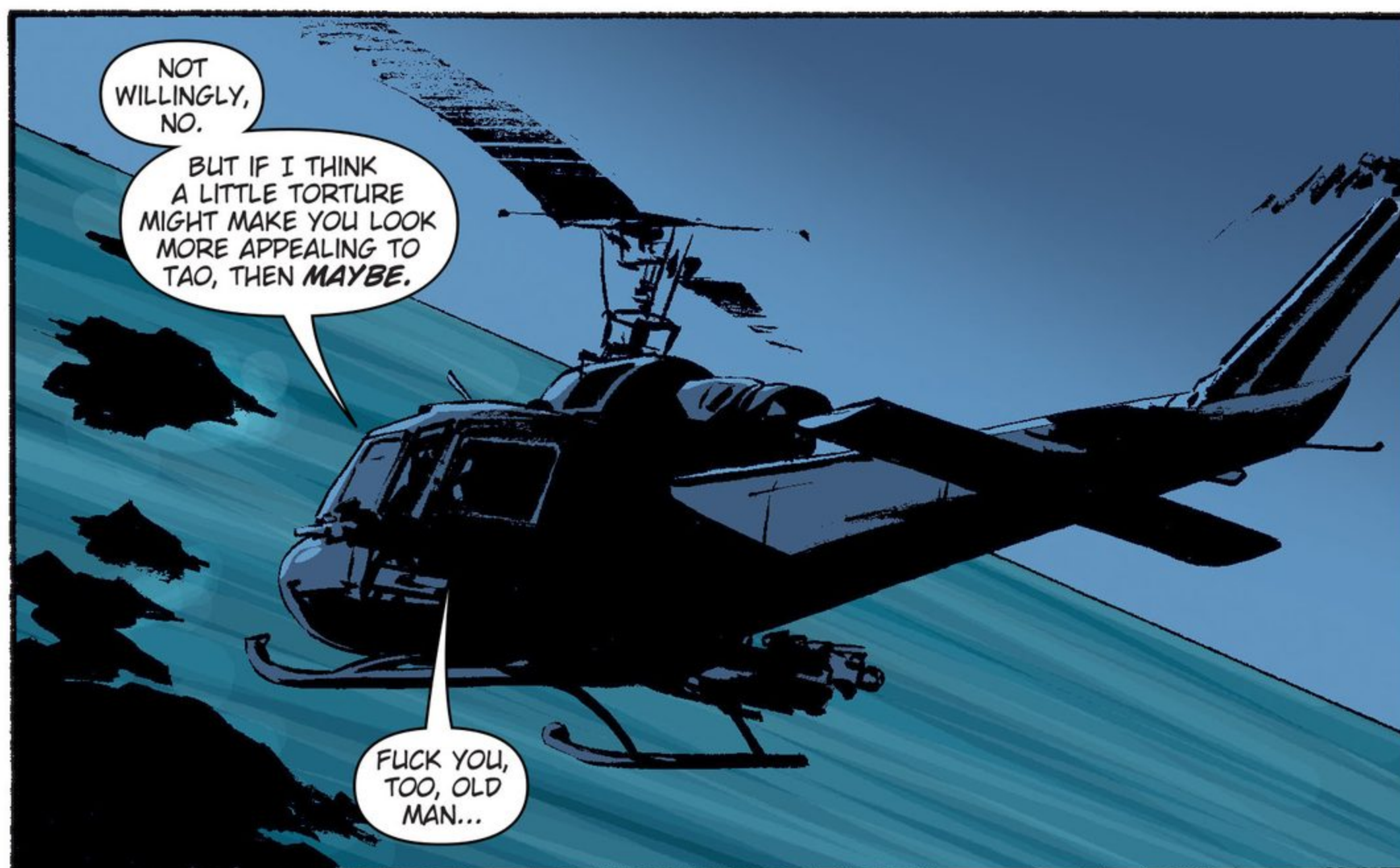
THE PENALTY FOR TREASON OF THIS LEVEL IS **DEATH**, BUT I IMAGINE IN YOUR CASE IT WOULD BE A LITTLE **DIFFERENT**... ONCE THEY LEARN WHAT YOU CAN **DO**.



THEY'LL WANT TO **STUDY** YOU. POSSIBLY **DISSECT** YOU... SEE HOW YOU WORK.



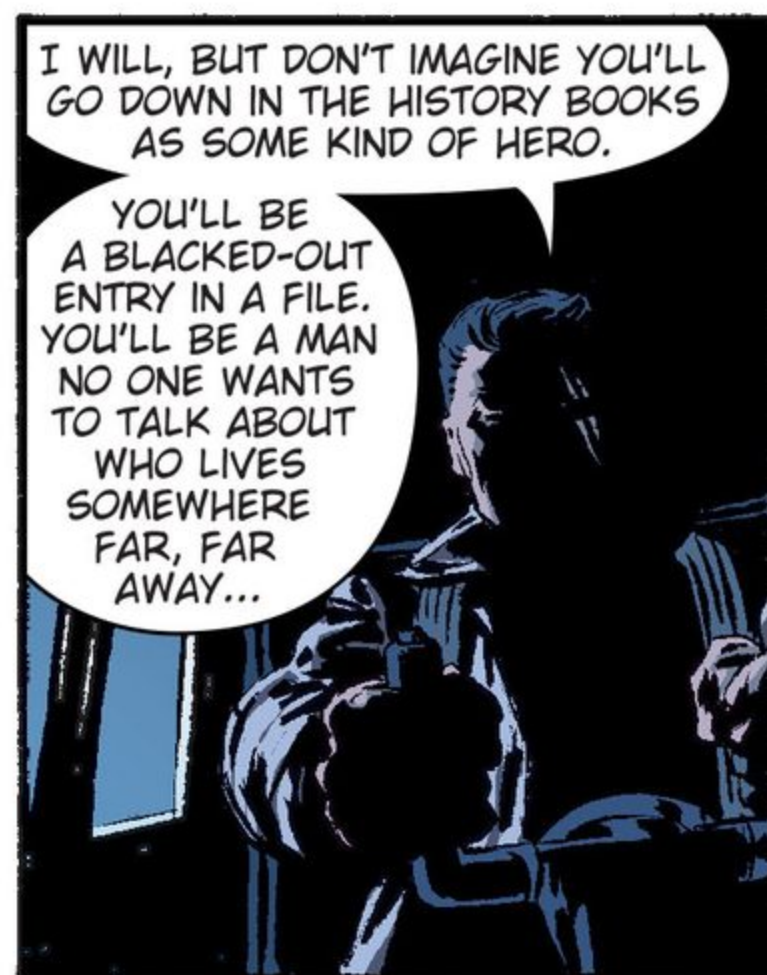
JESUS FUCKING CHRIST... AND YOU'D **LET THEM** DO THAT TO ME?



NOT WILLINGLY, NO.

BUT IF I THINK A LITTLE TORTURE MIGHT MAKE YOU LOOK MORE APPEALING TO TAO, THEN **MAYBE**.

FUCK YOU, TOO, OLD MAN...



...For the most part, at least.



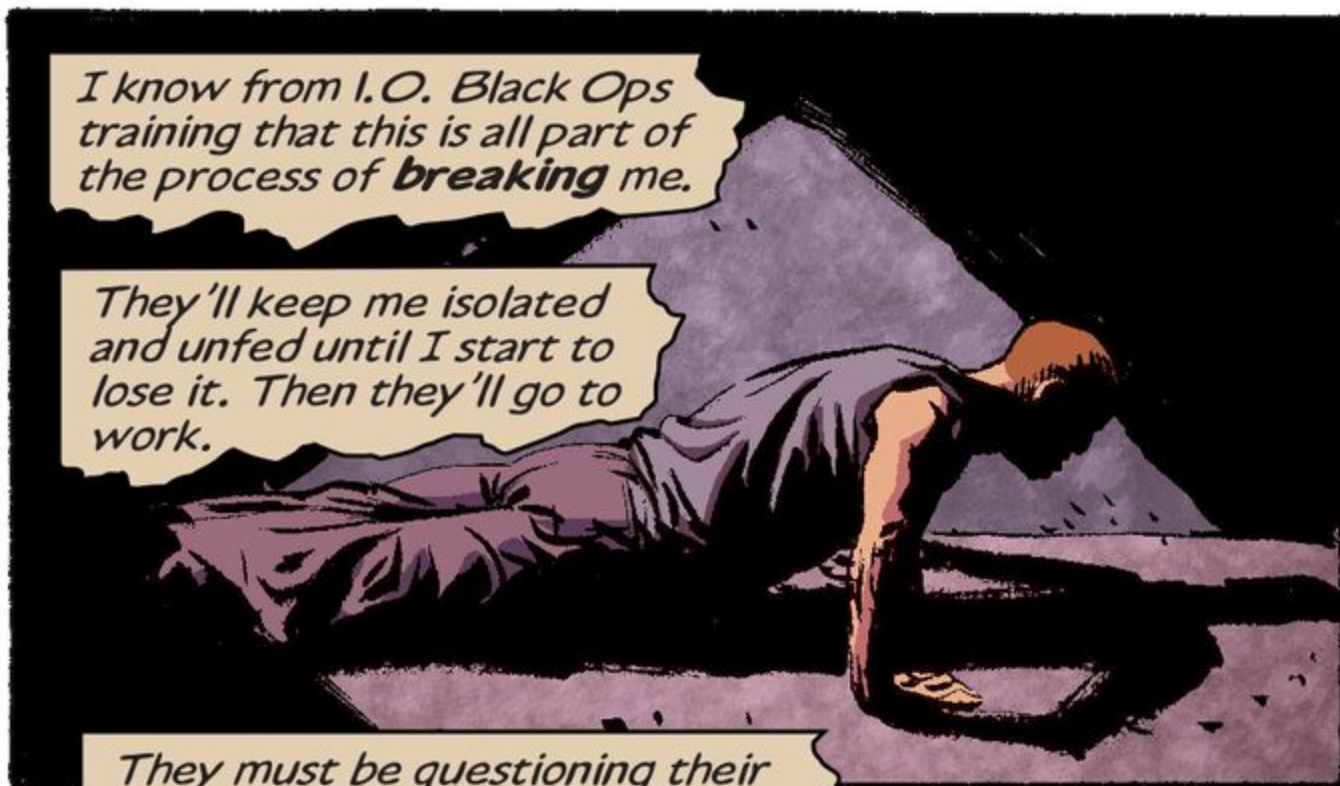
They gassed me to sleep on my first day and I woke up with bandages on my knee.

Then the next day I woke up to find all the bandages gone and the knee perfectly healed. That must have thrown them for a loop.



I know from I.O. Black Ops training that this is all part of the process of **breaking** me.

They'll keep me isolated and unfed until I start to lose it. Then they'll go to work.



They must be questioning their tactics, though, after observing my condition. Obviously torture won't work. Maybe I don't get hungry, either?

Except I do. I don't get hunger **pain**, but my body doesn't respond as well, my mind races in circles.



I forget how long a man can survive without food or water. Not that long.



I think I could die this way, and maybe through suffocation. I don't think my condition helps with non-physical damage.

I spend day four singing Beatles songs because that's all I can remember. It keeps my mind focused on something, though, and that's important for staying sane.

--NO ONE I THINK IS IN MY TREE-EE-EE, I MEAN IT MUST BE HIGH OR LO-O-OWW...



On day five there's a glass of water waiting when I wake up. I'm sure it's drugged with something, but I can't stop myself from drinking it. I'm just so fucking thirsty.



Right before I black out it occurs to me for about the hundredth time that this whole thing could actually be Tao's doing.

He sent us into that trap, after all.



What if this is all just another one of his manipulations?



The INTERROGATION

HELLO, HOLDEN...
MY NAME IS MARC
SLAYTON. YOU MIGHT
REMEMBER ME...

...I USED
TO WORK WITH
JOHN LYNCH.

YOU WERE IN *TEAM 7*.
KNEW MY DAD, TOO...

WHAT'S WITH
THE *CYBORG LEG*?
THOUGHT YOU HAD
SOME KIND OF ABILITY
TO REGENERATE...?

LONG STORY...
ANYWAY, WE'RE
HERE TO TALK
ABOUT *YOU*.

SO, DID THEY
THINK I'D BE MORE
COOPERATIVE SINCE
WE'VE MET
BEFORE?

I HAVE NO IDEA
WHAT *THEY* THINK.
I REQUESTED THIS
ASSIGNMENT...

WHY?

BECAUSE I
WANTED TO SQUEEZE A
CONFESSION OUT THROUGH
YOUR *BROKEN TEETH*, YOU
FUCKING TRAITOROUS
BASTARD...

...BUT AFTER
STUDYING YOU, IT
DOESN'T LOOK LIKE
THAT'S GOING TO BE
SO EASY.

HEH... SORRY TO
DISAPPOINT...

THAT'S ALL RIGHT.
I.O.'S GOT OTHER
WAYS TO DEAL WITH
PROBLEMS LIKE YOU
THESE DAYS.

THAT'S A JOKE,
RIGHT? I.O. WAS
BROKEN UP YEARS
AGO.

WE WERE RECENTLY
RE-CERTIFIED, WITH A
NEW MISSION. NOW
WE'RE *INTERNAL*
OPERATIONS.

YOU'RE SPYING
ON YOUR OWN
PEOPLE? AND I'M
THE TRAITOR?

WHY IS IT ALWAYS MEN LIKE *YOU* WHO
TURN BAD, CARVER? ONE DAY YOU'RE
WILLING TO DIE FOR YOUR COUNTRY,
THE NEXT YOU'RE WORKING TO
BRING IT DOWN...

WE ARE PROTECTING THE
SECURITY OF THIS GREAT
NATION.

TELL IT TO CONGRESS,
DICKHEAD, I COULD
GIVE A SHIT.

I'VE NEVER
UNDERSTOOD IT.
LIKE *FATHER*,
LIKE *SON*, I
GUESS, HUH?

I'D LIKE
TO SEE A
LAWYER
NOW.

THAT'S
A JOKE,
RIGHT?

APPARENTLY.

GOOD
ONE.

NOW, LET ME TELL
YOU WHAT I THINK
YOU'VE DONE,
CARVER...

WHO'S
THAT?

MY STENOGRAPHER.

THERE'S NOTHING
FOR HER TO TYPE
WITH.

THAT'S OKAY.
THERE'LL BE NO
RECORD OF
THIS.

YOU'RE NOT
HERE. THIS
FACILITY DOESN'T
EVEN *EXIST*.

SEEMS LIKE I'VE
SPENT HALF MY
LIFE IN PLACES
LIKE THIS.

SO, WHAT
DO YOU THINK,
SLAYTON?

I THINK YOU TRIED
TO KILL *LYNCH* A LITTLE
OVER A YEAR AGO.

I THINK YOU'RE WORKING FOR
A *TERRORIST ORGANIZATION*
INTENT ON CAUSING *HARM* TO
THIS COUNTRY.

AND I THINK
YOU CAN TELL
ME HOW TO
FIND *TAO*.



NOTHING.

WHAT DO YOU
MEAN, *NOTHING*?
THAT CAN'T--

SORRY. KEYWORD-
INDUCED *MEMORIES*
AREN'T GOING TO WORK
ANY BETTER THAN
TORTURE, SLAYTON.

APPARENTLY *MOST*
TELEPATHY ENTERS THE
MIND THROUGH YOUR
NERVOUS SYSTEM, AND MINE
IS ALL BLOCKED-UP.



OKAY, MAYBE YOU
DON'T UNDERSTAND
YOUR *SITUATION*, YOU
PIECE OF SHIT...

...BUT YOU ARE
ONE PUSSY HAIR AWAY
FROM SPENDING THE REST
OF YOUR LIFE STRAPPED
TO AN *OPERATING*
TABLE.

NOW, YOU TELL ME
WHAT YOU KNOW ABOUT
TAO, AND MAYBE WE CAN
MAKE A DEAL. MAYBE
GET YOU A ROOM WITH
A VIEW, INSTEAD.

HOW STUPID DO
YOU THINK I AM?
I USED TO WORK
FOR *LYNCH*.



I KNOW WHAT KINDA
PLANS YOU'VE GOT
FOR ME, WHETHER I
TELL YOU ANYTHING
OR *NOT*.

THIS IS POINTLESS.
I GUESS WE'LL JUST
HAVE TO GET OUR
ANSWERS FROM
YOUR *FRIEND*...



...LUCKILY, *SHE* DOESN'T
HAVE YOUR ABILITY TO
IGNORE PAIN.



That night they pipe the sound of Miss Misery's screams into my cell.



This is another textbook maneuver, though, so I give them nothing.



I try not to care.



But that doesn't work out so well.



So I go over my encounter with Slayton in my mind. Picking over all the details.



Marc Slayton was a high level post-human operative when I was sent under. And he and Lynch go back a long way.



*I only met him a few times, but I'm sure it was really him. Which means I really **am** being held by I.O.*

So why didn't I tell him the truth?



He wouldn't have believed me without proof, but does that even matter anymore?



There's nothing left to fight for.



*But the morning
twists the knife a
little more...*

HOLDEN...?
CAN YOU HEAR
ME?

--WHAT...?
I'M ...

WHY DID YOU
LET HIM GO,
HOLDEN?

WHAT?
VERONICA...?
WHAT ARE YOU
TALKING
ABOUT?

IN LONDON. YOU
LET MY HUSBAND
LIVE.

I NEED TO
KNOW WHY YOU
DID THAT.

*Veronica St. James. I
should've been expecting
her, but I honestly wasn't.*

*When Lynch forced me
into this life, he ended the
life I had with her. Of
course Slayton would try
to use that against me.*

*Push me to the edge
and then show me
what I lost.*

*Give me a reason to want
to clear my conscience,
assuming I have one.*

SO, THEY
THINK I'LL
TALK TO *YOU*
INSTEAD OF
SLAYTON?

NO. THEY'RE READY
TO SHIP YOU OFF TO THE
FACTORY. I WANTED TO
DO THIS ANYWAY.

WHY?

BECAUSE I
THINK *YOU* WERE
THE AGENT THAT
SIR MALCOLM JONES
WAS TRYING TO
BRING IN WHEN
HE DIED.

AND WHY
DO YOU THINK
THAT?

BECAUSE OF
LONDON. YOU
STOPPED YOUR MAN
FROM SHOOTING ON
THAT TRAIN.

YOU
LET ALAN
LIVE.

AND IF I WAS
THAT AGENT?
COULD YOU
SAVE ME?

IF THERE'S
PROOF, YES, I
MIGHT BE ABLE
TO SAVE YOU.



GO HOME,
VERONICA.

GO BACK
TO YOUR
HUSBAND.



NO. YOU ARE
GOING TO *TALK* TO
ME, YOU SON-OF-
A-BITCH.

NOTHING
I SAY WILL MAKE
ANY DIFFERENCE.



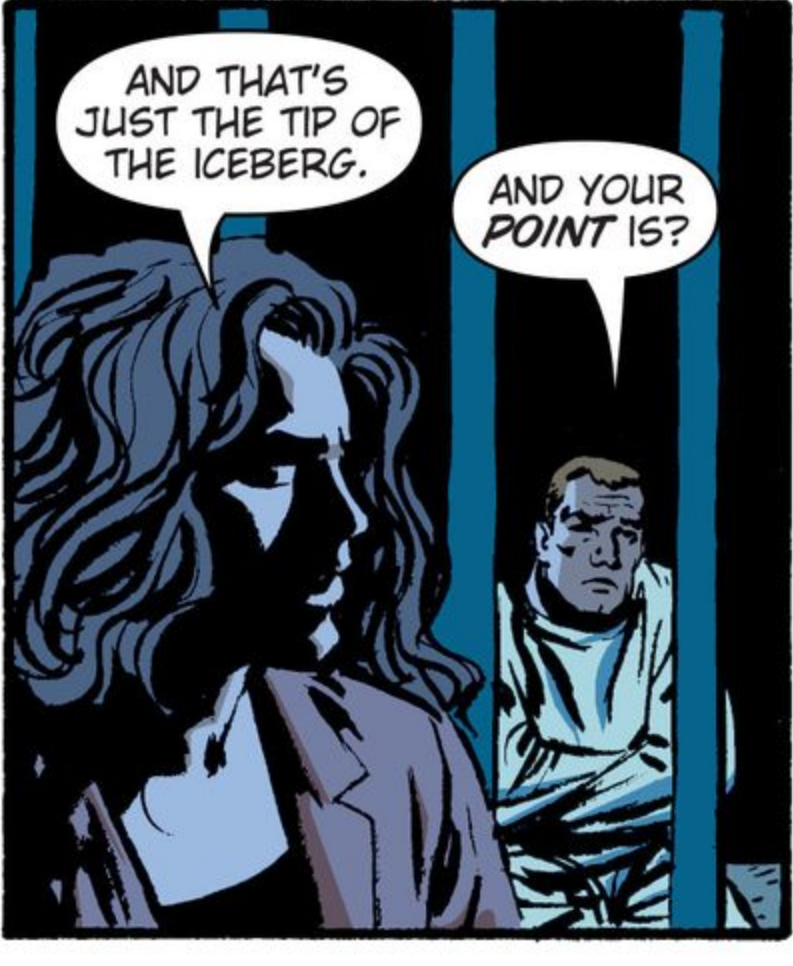
IT MIGHT
TO ME.

I MEAN,
WHAT THE
HELL *ELSE* AM
I SUPPOSED
TO DO?



IN THE PAST TWELVE MONTHS
ALONE YOU'RE SUSPECTED OF
KILLING TURBINE *AND* AN
UNDERCOVER OPERATIVE
KNOWN AS THE *NIHILIST*.

YOU'RE THE
NUMBER ONE
SUSPECT IN LYNCH'S
SHOOTING.



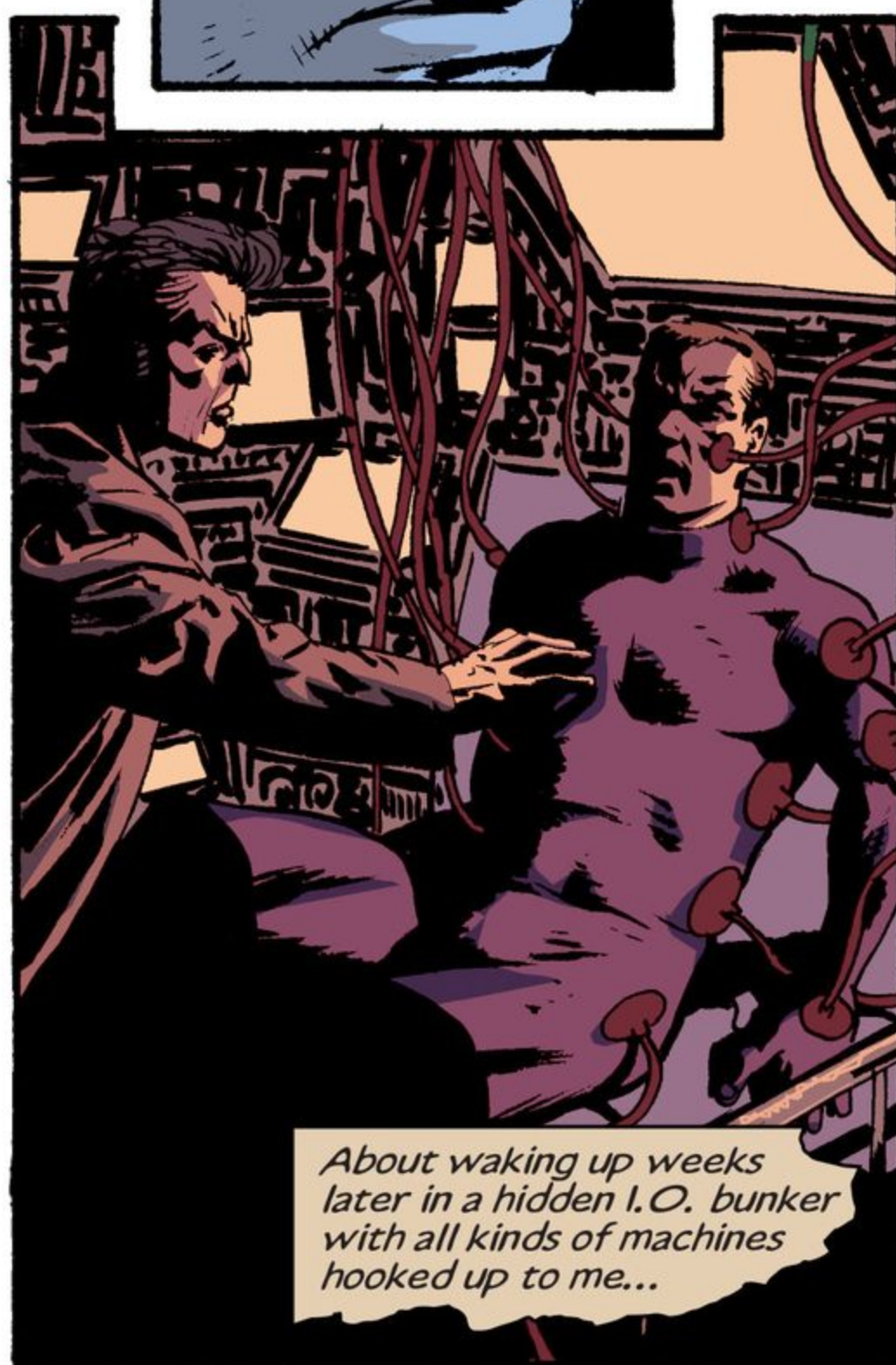
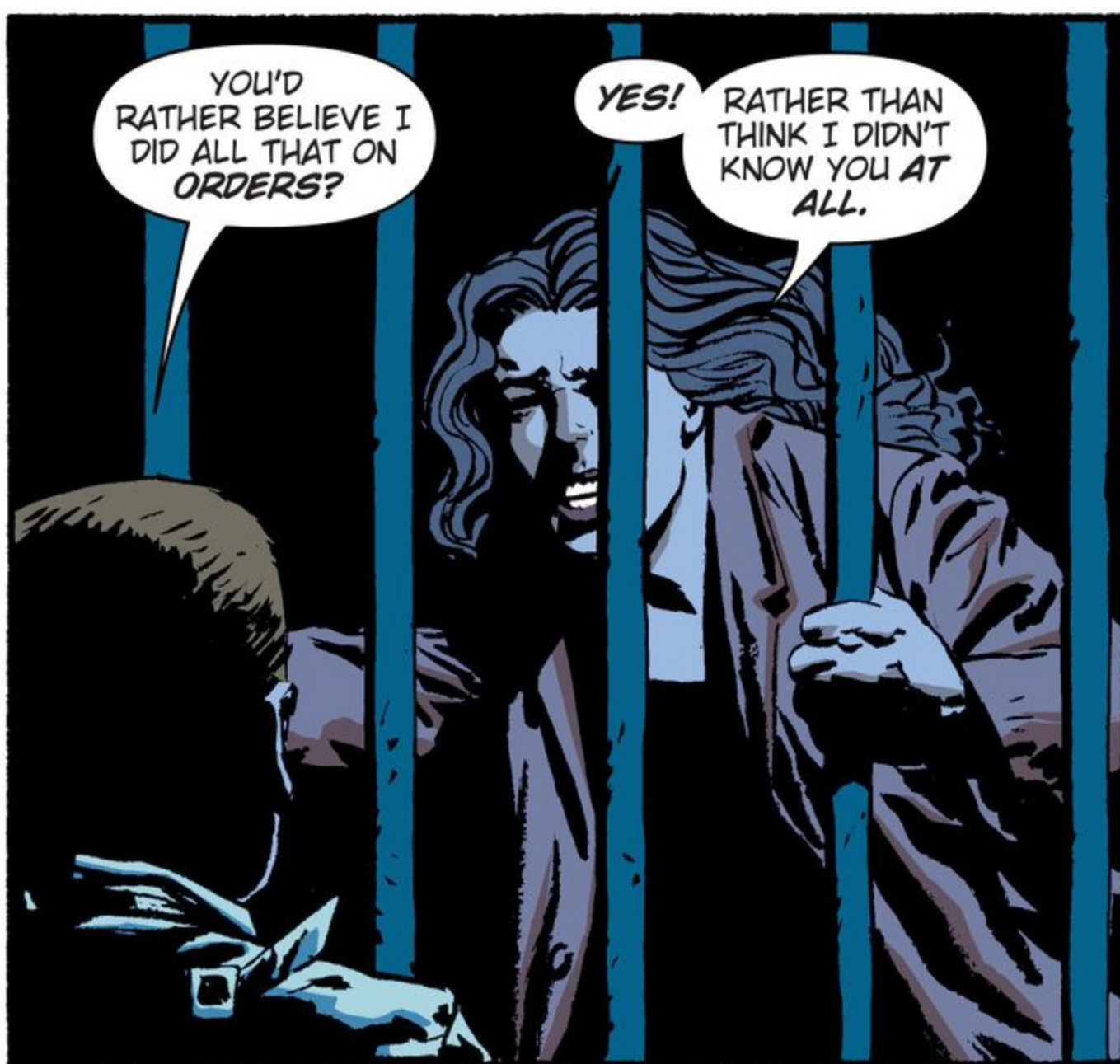
AND THAT'S
JUST THE TIP OF
THE ICEBERG.

AND YOUR
POINT IS?



I HAVE TO *KNOW*. I HAVE
TO KNOW IF THE MAN I WAS
IN LOVE WITH COULD *DO*
THOSE THINGS...

COULD BETRAY
EVERYTHING HE
STOOD FOR...



I want to fall down on my knees and beg her to forgive me for everything...



But I don't.

Because I let Lynch tear us apart. Betraying her was my first step down this road...



...And whether she knows it or not, it would just break her heart a little bit more to know her life was ruined for a lie.

I can't do that to her.



WHAT, DON'T YOU THINK ALL THE PEOPLE I KILLED FOR I.O. HAD FAMILIES THAT LOVED THEM, TOO?



THIS IS WHO I'VE ALWAYS BEEN. YOU JUST DIDN'T SEE IT.



THAT'S NOT TRUE, HOLDEN.

JUST GO AWAY, VERONICA. I'M NOT THE MAN YOU'RE LOOKING FOR.



Funny, this is almost how I imagined it would be.

Me, locked in some box, keeping my mouth shut, still playing my part. The one Lynch wrote for me.

Too bad there's no chance of him stepping forward to save me. Make me disappear to some island in the Caribbean.

Hell, maybe I don't even want that anymore. So many people have died on my account, so many others hurt beyond repair.

Maybe I don't deserve a way out.

*Or maybe the **only** real way out is the way I'm headed.*

The slaughterhouse.

*Maybe **that's** why I'm not begging Slayton to believe I'm on his side.*

YOU WANNA HEAR A FUNNY STORY, CARVER?

SURE, BUT IT BETTER BE *REALLY* FUNNY.

SO, IT'S LIKE THIS... I'VE GOT TWO DIFFERENT WOMEN TELLING ME THE *SAME* THING...

THEN I'D SAY IT REALLY *IS* TOO SMALL.

ONE OF THEM IS YOUR EX-FIANCÉ, A HIGHLY DECORATED OFFICER WHO I'VE PERSONALLY WORKED WITH ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS...

THE OTHER IS MISS MISERY, YOUR *CURRENT* FLUCK-BUDDY, I'M ASSUMING.

AND SEE, THE FUNNY PART IS BOTH OF THEM ARE TRYING TO TELL ME THAT *YOU* ARE AN UNDERCOVER OPERATIVE...

THAT YOU WORK FOR *US*.

ANY IDEA WHERE THEY'D GET *THAT* IDEA?

YOU'RE FULL OF SHIT. MISS MISERY WOULDN'T EVEN TELL YOU TO **FUCK OFF** UNDER TORTURE.

OH, YOU'RE RIGHT THERE...THOUGH WE DID MANAGE TO GET A FEW CHOICE SAMPLES OF HER HIGH TONES FOR YOUR LISTENING PLEASURE...

BUT OTHER THAN THAT, SHE GAVE US NOTHING...

UNTIL I TOLD HER WHAT WE'RE GOING TO DO TO YOU.

THEN SHE ACTUALLY STARTED TRYING TO SAVE YOUR SKIN...SAID YOU WERE TAO'S **TOP SUSPECT** IN AN INTERNAL MOLE HUNT.

THINKS YOU KNOCKING HER OUT IN THAT WAREHOUSE PROVED THE CASE.

WHICH LEAVES ME WITH ONE QUESTION, CARVER...

...WHY **DID** YOU KNOCK HER OUT?

I DON'T REMEMBER. IT DOESN'T MATTER...

YOU'RE RIGHT ABOUT *THAT*. DOESN'T MAKE A FUCKING BIT OF DIFFERENCE.

IF YOU ARE DEEP COVER, NO ONE EVER *AUTHORIZED* IT THAT THERE'S ANY RECORD OF...



...SO UNTIL SOMEONE ON THE LEVEL OF THE *PRESIDENT* TELLS ME DIFFERENT, YOU ARE GUILTY OF EVERYTHING WE'VE GOT ON YOU.

SO YOU DO NOT PASS GO, DO NOT COLLECT TWO HUNDRED DOLLARS... YOU GO STRAIGHT TO JAIL. OR IN THIS CASE, AN I.O. LAB BURIED IN THE ROCKY MOUNTAINS.



'CAUSE TO PUT IT BLUNTLY, WITH OUR NEW CERTIFICATION, WE REALLY *NEED* A BIG CATCH THIS QUARTER TO SECURE OUR *FUNDING*.



AND CAPTURING A ROGUE AGENT TURNED INTERNATIONAL *TERRORIST* SOUNDS A LOT MORE IMPRESSIVE THAN ACCIDENTALLY BRINGING IN ONE OF OUR OWN MEN, DOESN'T IT?



SO I GUESS I'M SERVING MY COUNTRY EITHER WAY, HUNH?

YOU'RE FUNNY. I'M GONNA MISS THAT...



TAKE HIM AWAY.





LI MMM, COMMANDER SLAYTON, WE'VE GOT A PROBLEM WITH THE OTHER PRISONER...

WE CAN'T SEEM TO GET HER TO STOP VOMITING.

WHAT? WHO THE FUCK IS FEEDING HER?



NO ONE. SHE'S THROWING UP BLOOD AND MUCUS...

I KNOW WHAT'S WRONG WITH HER.



SOLDIER, GET THAT PRISONER TO THE TRANSPORT BAY, NOW.

SIR, YES SIR.



WAIT A MINUTE! HEY--LISTEN TO ME!

SHE'S GONNA DIE, YOU MOTHER-FUCKER!

SHE'S OUR PROBLEM NOW, CARVER. LET US--



OVER HERE!
OVER HERE!

GET ME COVER
FIRE AT FOUR
O'CLOCK!

AAAAHHH!

HERE. THIS
ONE, THIS IS ONE
OF *OURS*...

YOU TWO,
CLEAR THAT
HALLWAY.

WE'RE
LOOKING FOR
ONE MORE, A
FEMALE.



WHAT'S--
HEY...

IT'S ALL RIGHT, SIR,
WE'LL HAVE YOU BACK
TO HOME BASE IN AN
HOUR...

YOU'RE
HERE TO...TO
SAVE ME?

THAT'S RIGHT,
SIR, TAO'S
ORDERS.

No.

No...I can't go back
there. Not ever.

I can't go back
there. I can't go
anywhere...

So then... What
the fuck am I
doing?